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ABSTRACT

This paper asserts that the realities of the U.S. system of education as it stands today depict the very essence of the nation's democracy in a pluralistic setting. The paper describes how the United States has addressed a multiethnic population by creating multicultural education. As an ideology, the U.S. system supports globalization yet preserves individual identities, allowing students to understand diversity while developing shared values and common tradition. It provides the medium to help all students find a place for themselves within the whole as they construct a vision of pluralism to live by. It is in this realm that such a framework can be adopted by Lebanon, since Lebanon's new national curriculum promotes cultural awareness and global communication. The paper suggests that four major changes must occur in order to create a pluralistic curriculum: change in teaching methods, change in the school environment, change in the curriculum content, and knowledge of how learning takes place to ensure academic achievement for all diverse students. (Contains 35 references.) (SM)

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AMERICAN CHUNKY BLUE CHEESE SALAD: A LOOK AT MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION

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The realities of America's systems of education as it stands today depict the very essence of the nation's democracy in a pluralistic setting. The purpose of the paper is to expose how the United States of America addressed a multiethnic population by creating multicultural education. As an ideology, its system supports globalization yet preserves individual identities, allowing students to understand diversity yet develop shared values and common tradition. It provides the medium to help each student find a place for himself within the whole as he constructs a vision of pluralism to live by. It is in this realm that such a framework be adopted by Lebanon since Lebanon's New National Curriculum promotes cultural awareness and global communication.

The United States of America has addressed the issue of pluralism in education since the 1960's. Two important factors contributed to this happening: The 1965 Immigration Act brought with it a new wave of immigrants to the land of opportunity, and the Native American Indians, African Americans, Mexican American, and the Puerto Ricans were asking for the present school curriculum to give recognition to their cultures (Spring, 2001). In addressing such an issue, the emphasis on a single culture—the Anglo-American culture—had to give way to make place for all the diverse heterogeneous rights facing the new America. This created what William James called Pluralism. On the subject of pluralism & unity, James noted that “things are with one another in many ways, but nothing includes everything or dominates over everything” for he believed that in life there was expanded meaning as man became tolerant to the complexities and multiplicities that existed in society (Bailey, Halsted, & Michigan State University, 2002, p.1).

Reflecting on educating in a multicultural reality today has given way to influencing social, civil and global politics. Bruffee (2002) notes that after 30 year of liberal education, the focus is now on examining and celebrating diversity in the hope to recognize and affirm genuine commonalities and not to reinforce differences. Moreover, Haley (2001) suggests that educators must modify the curriculum taught in schools to become more inclusive of other cultures and languages because in the near future the minority of today will become the majority of tomorrow. Furthermore, Hoffman (2001) suggests the use of collaborative learning within the multiethnic classrooms in conjunction with traditional learning skills since academic performance has been seen to increase amongst multiethnic students and the students' ethnic perceptions, in general, seem to improve.

With the three reflections in mind, the purpose of the paper is fourfold: The first purpose is to answer the question on how the American system of education addresses the multiethnic population in the United States. The second purpose is to show that the American system of education is a model that supports globalization. The third purpose is to show that the American system of education globalizes yet preserves individual

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identities, and the fourth purpose is to show that the American system of education's framework is a model that Lebanon may adopt.

As it stands now, it is my belief that the education systems that exist today tend to have basic common goals that reinforce their maintenance and sustenance. I believe that, today, the systems of education are moving to address the issue of globalization. That is why I believe it is important for the individual to become part of the global salad, yet, at the same time, keep his identity as defined by his cultural, ethnic, moral, and social values and customs. I believe that preserving uniqueness of identity adds flavor to the overall picture and challenges the bonds of unity keeping the ongoing struggle of existence aflame.

To outline the facts as to how pluralism in education came to be enables us to clearly see why the change in education took place. In America, as the populace became more aware of the diversity that started to define the existence of each "group", they came to accept diversity in their surrounding. This was not so easy, so the populace turned to the school system to attempt to teach acceptance of diversity within the societies. According to Tyack's Introduction to *Schools The Story of American Public Education* (Mondale & Patton, 2001), schools continue to shape the "core of national identity" (p. 1). He noted, "when citizens deliberate about the education of the young, they are also debating the shape of the future for the whole nation" (p. 2). So as the public became more and more accepting of diversity within the education system, they no longer segregated students dividing them up into mainstream and special needs, be they students with a learning disability, students at risk, or disadvantaged students. The schools desegregated, integrating the mainstream students with those who had special needs. Thus, this enabled all students to function in the culturally pluralistic society. Such a move introduced the concept of multiculturalism in education. The system of education had moved from creating a melting pot ideology to creating a tossed salad ideology; it had moved from creating an American identity amongst all the students to creating the American identity. The intended goal of action for the public school system was that no child in the system or society was to be left behind. A point of action that Meryl Streep, in the Foreword of *School: The Story of American Public Education*, reminds the populace should not be taken for granted since it is "relatively new for public education to integrate all Americans together" (Mondale & Patton, 2001, p. x).

With all the Whites, the African American, the Asians, the Indians, the Pacific Islanders, and the Hispanic populations present in the United States, it was not a surprise that the changes took place in the education system for the concern was, and still remains, according to Cochran-Smith (2001), on how to educate all Americans well. The Whites made up 72 percent of the population according to the U.S. Census Bureau (1999) and the Asians made up 3.7 percent, the Indians 0.7 percent, the Hispanics 12.5 percent and the African American 12.1 percent of the population according to the U.S. Census Bureau (2000). It must be noted that within each of the minority groups there exists further ethnic and racial subgroups. Accordingly, the U.S. Census Bureau (2001) published projections that by the year 2060, the Whites would make up 50 percent of the population, and by 2050, the Asians would make up 9 percent, the Indians one percent, the African Americans 16 percent and the Hispanics 24 percent. The percentages that exist should not be overlooked as being non-influential in the making of a nation. Apart from the diverse ethnic and cultural group presences in society, another influence as to why

change took place was the fact that many belonged to the low SES brackets and many had suffered low achievement status proving that educating the privileged and segregating the minorities into special needs programs or vocational training was not meeting the needs of the democratic system that valued the ideology of the educated American citizen. The rights of the diverse needed to be accommodated and addressed and this was best done through desegregation..

As former University of Chicago President, Maynard (in Campbell, Campbell, & Dickinson, 1999) noted “the best education for the best is the best education for all” (p. 184), the country turned to constructive pluralism. President George W. Bush, in 2001, in his endeavor to address the issues of U.S. education pledged that ‘no child is to be left behind’ working on the belief that each individual in his own way would contribute to a multi-ethnic future (U.S. Department of Education, 2002). Takaki (1993) enforced the idea of accepting diversity and summarized well the point that pluralism attempts to make; he noted that “a society’s future will be influenced by which ‘mirror’ [its people] choose to see [themselves]. America does not belong to one race or group... and Americans have been constantly redefining their national identity... by sharing their stories, they invite [the people] to see [themselves] in a different mirror” (p. 17).

By applying reason to the system of thought introduced, it is possible to see how the United States adopted a model framework to enable all its citizens to fit into, ensuring that ‘no child was left behind’. This adopted system of thought parallels a global flavor to accepting diversity, yet still preserving the individual identities that exist. The mixing and matching was primarily based on demographic choice, be it at the individual, the societal, or the country level.

The system of thought gave birth to cultural pluralism. The melting pot became a tossed salad, mosaic where distinctive group characteristics remained well defined within a larger whole. The individuals were not separated based on culture, society, economic status, but were assimilated because the United States had become a universal nation. The system of thought needed to build a system of action by educating the masses in this way of thinking. Adopting diversity was not about giving the individuals who were different special attention; it was about giving them equal education prospects. As history has proved itself, and as is stated in every Introduction to Education textbook, the systems of education remain the power models to move or define societies of the world. A school provides the students with academic knowledge and skills to function successfully in society, but it also prepares them to enter the work force and to be responsible active citizens (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2001a). Thus, through the education system, society constructed pluralism to find commonalities amongst the diversities. The American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE) noted in 1972 that “to endorse cultural pluralism is to endorse the principle that there is no one model American” (p. 9) This continues to be endorsed as the case in the education system of America as noted by Miller in his book, *The Unmaking of Americans* (1998).

Multicultural education refers to the variety of ways a school can take productive account of cultural differences among the students and improve the opportunities for the students with cultural backgrounds distinct from the present American mainstream students. It has three main purposes. Its first purpose is to help the students acquire the knowledge and commitment needed to make reflective decisions. Its second purpose is to take personal, social and civic action to promote democracy and democratic living; and

its third purpose is to enable the students to become citizens in a pluralistic nation and world. Such multiculturalism calls for the education systems to create a more inclusive curriculum and to focus on improving instruction to enable all students to learn. The curriculum is to be shaped around creating interdependence, development and cooperation among the diverse (England, 1992). The course materials and research projects are drawn from ethnicity, race, gender, disabilities and other studies to understand the information. The multiculturalism in education not only addresses appreciation of cultural diversity, but it largely addresses anti-bias education. Such an educational endeavor is to strive for unity in and through diversity.

Having witnessed the many weaknesses in the systems of education across America leaving a vast number of citizens classified as lacking in literacy, President George W. Bush, on January 8, 2002, signed into law the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. According the U.S. Department of Education, the Act is classified as the “most sweeping reform for elementary and secondary education since it was first enacted in 1965 ... [it] redefines the federal role in K-12 education and [it] will help close the achievement gap between the disadvantaged and minority students” (U.S. Department of Education, 2002, p. 1). The Act exposes reform measures to the education systems at large by emphasizing the use of four basic principles recommended for application in their prospective systems. The Act calls for “stronger accountability for results; increased flexibility and local control, expanded options for parents, and emphasis on using proven teaching methods to address students’ needs” (U. S. Department of Education, 2002, p. 1). According to a five-year plan task force report on diversity and internationalization (2002), living among diversity is not the same as learning about diversity. The education systems of American need to acknowledge this when planning out their curricula. Accordingly, the report emphasizes that a “truly diverse and international education should empower all the students with the curriculum and support services they need to appreciate ethnic diversity to understand the national and international causes of racism, discrimination and exploitation and to work together to create a more just society” (p. 1). The report went on to note that when differences are denied, the system is disregarding the daily happenings of people of different race, ethnicity, physical abilities and genders.

In my paper, I keep referring to systems of education. That is because the United States does not have a national education system. The system of education in the United States functions in the following manner. The Department of Education, at national level, makes recommendations; so does the Department of Education at a state level. The departments recommend. It should be noted that there are no mandates, leaving democratic choices to be made within the schools. From those recommendations, systems of education are developed. Each state is divided up into school districts that develop their own system of education to follow based upon the recommendations given. Each state district is free to consider what factors in the surrounding environment it sees as pertinent to address in its curriculum development policy and implementation. Thus, there exists at least 50 systems of education, exemplifying a state, a local school district within a state, etc... According to Pappalardo (2002), a former School Superintendent in the New Jersey Education System, New York or New Jersey have around 500 local districts and they all have their own curriculum they follow. She notes that this is also true of the achievement Standards; recommendations on both the national level by government or private associations are given; however, democratic choices are made to

maintain how standards are addressed and employed within each school system. This is based on researching and addressing the needs of each school district's population.

The content of a pluralistic curriculum must maintain an on-going integrated multi-curriculum experience throughout the student's years of schooling. It must include ethnic, racial and/or cultural perspectives in relation to the content course work. The basic academic curriculum includes mathematics, English, a possible second language, science, history/geography, the Arts. The emphasis through out the curriculum is on both theory and practice. There must be the possibility of increased skill concentration and special assistance where needed, such that differentiated instruction and/ or bilingual education may be practiced options to address certain needs within the system.

To have such a curriculum, there must be a committed move by the school environment as a whole to adopt and understand all aspects of diversity. Moreover, the faculty itself must adopt diverse perspectives in their teaching, and they must draw on examples and contents from the various cultures. They must be aware of the multicultural contributions that exist, and, as teachers, they must have the students contribute their own knowledge and experience based on their cultural/ethnic heritages. Furthermore, there must be societal support for learning and involvement; this support includes parents, and social, secular, non-secular, educational, and business organizations (Henry, 2002; National Center for Educational Statistics, 2001b).

To carry out such a curriculum, at least four major changes must take place. There has to be change in the teaching method, change in the school environment, change in the content of the curriculum and knowledge on how learning takes place to ensure academic achievement for all the diverse populace. Knowledge on how learning takes place is basic to any teacher education program; however, what needs to be addresses here is how differentiated learning is influenced by diversity. Awareness of knowledge construction and acquisition, of biases, of individual differences, learner's needs and styles, multiple intelligences, dialect differences, bilingual and multiethnic curriculum needs allows for a more integrated learning equation outcome to take place. To clarify these changes, take for example, how a class may study how America was discovered. Instead of resorting to having the class, as a whole, consider the textbook historical explanation, the teacher may have the students read material written to show European and Indian views. She may then ask the students to compare views, carry out activities to develop critical thinking skills, apply active construction of knowledge as opposed to passive textbook learning. This may entail having students do group work, mapping out, role playing for other classes, having an exhibition, designing bulleting boards, etc....

The first major change or adjustment that needs to be considered is the teaching method to ensure that all students achieve the learning objectives. Research points out that when dealing with diverse groups of students, it is very important that the students perceive themselves as being equal in status to all others in the interactive classroom settings (Gage & Berliner, 1998). Likewise, it is important to foster positive inter-group and intra-group attitudes and contacts (Henson & Eller, 1999). Applying cooperative learning techniques and/or collaborative learning opportunities encourages non-threatening learning conditions, interdependence, interaction and decision-making (Hoffman, 2001; Jensen, 1995). For example, Campbell, Campbell, & Dickinson (1999) note that Hispanics tend to achieve better when learning activities are based on collaboration as opposed to competition. The educator must also be able to utilize multi-

modal instruction or differentiated instruction, and individualized and self-directed learning (Sabieh, 1995). Students must be exposed to inquiry based, learner centered, problem solving mediums where knowledge build up involves not only acquiring and discovery learning but also getting the students involved in giving information about themselves, their culture, customs, etc. The teacher needs to be able to act as a facilitator and director of learning within the diverse set up. That also means that the teacher, more than ever, is expected to focus on improving instruction for the students who have not learnt standard English or who have other cultural differences that may put them at a disadvantage in the classroom.

The second change that needs to be addressed in a multicultural curriculum has to do with changing the school environment. It is essential to create a school culture with diverse elements of flavor. That is, there must be a creation of a positive school climate that accepts and respects all forms of diversity. There should be absence of racial, ethnic, social, cultural and gender assumptions, tracking and labeling. There should be minimal expectation of putting students in special programs of study, based on needs, attitudes and perceptions. Overall there, should be an open and positive ongoing interactive relationship build up maintained with the school administration, teaching body and the students (Bluestein, 1989).

The third major change that needs to be considered in implementing a pluralistic system of education has to do with changing the content of the curriculum. Such a change, it must be emphasized, may become a personal and subjective endeavor of the school district, the school, the grade or even the teacher in question. This is best developed to fit the needs of a particular populace attending the system of education in question (Cunningham & Allington, 1999). Research has pointed to the fact that there has been great success in achieving multicultural education goals when the Arts are incorporated into the curriculum across the subjects (Burnaford, Aprill & Weiss, 2001; Nicholson-Nelson, 1998; Novelly, 1985). Cultural diversity exposed through the Arts is a very powerful medium a teacher may use to create learning environments for her students. Pappalardo (2002) notes that the idea here is that the art form emerges through a cultural context, through tastes, customs, ideologies, and philosophies in the form of expressions. Within the curriculum, the Arts are to be used since social forces of the times influence the production of the art expressions at hand. This provides students with a medium to analyze the art, thus, having them acquire intended the knowledge, be it language, history, science, maths, and, at the same time, the students become aware of the diversities and similarities of culture across space and time. For example, if the students are given to study the general theme of Chinese Culture and Art, each student creates an individual theme to study based on specific learning goals set out for him by the teacher. Choice of sub-themes, for example, may be types of art: folklore, touristic, fine, etc; material and techniques used in artifacts; historical association with periods or beliefs; functions in relation to daily Chinese life: clothes, dress, politics, etc... The students in the class may be divided into groups to work together to create a final project or portfolio. They may be asked to collect visual samples – photographs, dances, songs; to share with others in the group; to examine in class what they have collected to discuss, describe, interpret, analyze; to research other resources and gather using other research techniques – by going to embassies, organizations, books, etc...; to evaluate all the finding to put together; and to share final outcome with others in class or outside with the school or

support environment—puppet show, exhibition, play. Another way, Campbell, Campbell, and Dickinson (1999) suggest is to expose students to culturegrams, which are profiles developed to illustrate cultures which, in turn, allow the students to better understand the cultures in question. For example, cultural themes to study may include how the American Indians greet, visit, educate, celebrate holidays, care for their land, etc.

The teaching of mathematics may be done through the Arts; it may also be done through language learning, as can the teaching of the sciences (Pappalardo, 2002; Countryman, 1992). No matter what subject is being dealt with, the important factor at play here is how to get the system to integrate the subject matter across the curriculum.

The fourth major change that needs to be acknowledged when dealing with a multicultural curriculum is how learning takes place within a diverse populace. This implies that basic knowledge acquisition is to be drawn on the teacher's own and the students' own cultural assumptions and biases that influence the learning process. As an educator, the teaching of concepts, events and issues must be exposed from various perspectives and must include experiences from within the diverse groups of students to make the learning process meaningful. Moreover, the teacher needs to know that certain learning styles are related to an individual's SES, race, and/ or culture. Differentiated instruction may be needed to meet different learning styles. For example, Campbell, Campbell, and Dickinson (1999) note that American Indians students may prefer face to face, one-on-one learning encounters as opposed to group work; Hispanic prefer to work in class as opposed to having to do homework; Whites and Asians tend to be more competitive in nature while Mexicans tend to be more cooperative oriented; Asians tend not to be assertive in class and they do not like to participate in class.

Dialect difference is another issue that needs to be considered as an influence to how learning is influence. For example, many students may not know proper or standard English, yet they know accepted "cultural" English – Black English, which is not slang. The teacher needs to know enough about it to decide whether to use that to her advantage to build associative bridges to develop skills to switch to Standard English since inappropriate decision making about language use may hinder the student's learning process.

Many systems of education are considering using bilingual education where the use student's native tongue is used in teaching. Having eight or more students in a class from a particular group has encouraged many schools to consider bilingual education as an initial instruction medium or for a certain time period, other schools have considered keeping first language maintenance programs ongoing or transitional, while others have focused on structured or full immersion programs. Controversies exist for all such program considerations, showing both positive and negative outcomes for all; thus making it mandatory for a school district to decide objectively and rationally what is best for its populace (Barca, 2002; Tench, 2002; Vaishnav, 2002) The question confronting many school districts is what happens when more than one group needs such attention?

There are considerations being given as to dividing students up to maintain a multiethnic curriculum and instruction policy within the system to reinforce certain students' identity and self worth, allowing them to become aware of the other cultures and why treated in such a manner. Such programs are being used with American Indians where texts have been created to enhance reading and maths skills programs (Campbell, Campbell & Dickinson, 1999). I do not support such a program ideology since this

separation from other cultures may build on their self-ethnocentric character, which I believe may promote segregation and discrimination.

Another issue that is focused on here has to do with cognitive development: The way various groups comprehend or carry out higher order learning tasks may be influenced by their basic skills developments or by their language—native or English--development (Gage & Berliner, 1998; Gagne, 1985). Also school districts need to be clear as to why they are to develop a student's language skill: Is a system intent on developing the skill for language immersion as the student is a citizen of the United States of America, or is it for a specific purpose or for communication in the world?

Kussrow (1995) concludes in his paper, entitled *Redefining Equality and Fairness in Culturally Diverse Classrooms*, "it is great to know that most people are born with almost unlimited capacity, multiple intelligences and diverse learning modalities. ... Diversity, not uniformity, needs to be the dominant feature of all learning enterprises ... [for] it is through that very diversity that [individuals] become more appreciative of [the] similarities to others who are also learning and growing, regardless of age, gender, race or culture" (pp. 14-15). So by building knowledge by acting through the limitless boundaries of diversity, discrimination becomes minimized within the pluralistic school environment.

In retrospect to all the changes that need consideration when maintaining a multicultural curriculum, it is this fourth major change—how learning takes place amongst the diverse populace—that needs to consider the quality of the education system that the school district in question is striving for since all the other aspects of change must recognize the learning outcome. Constructing knowledge across the school population is the basis of the pluralistic education curriculum to enhance diversity through a unified understanding.

In conclusion, the students in a multicultural education system are better able to participate as citizens in a pluralistic nation or world because they have not only learnt the content about their own country and world from diverse perspectives but also from those who have shaped the local and the international cultures. The students have learnt to inquire to gain important learning skills; they have learnt to be open and accepting of the diverse.

However, it is important to be cautious of the shortcomings that may exist in such a multiculturalism of thought. For one thing, there may exist biases in thought and, thus, the students must have developed enough critical thinking skills to be able to judge or seek out assurance of balance, objectivity, historical accuracy, representative ness, and valid excuses for underachievement. A second shortcoming has to do I believe with the fear of dividing the populace as opposed to unifying it because of the educator's or the students' knowledge, misused, misinterpreted or insufficient to form competent understanding of the elements that make diversity a flavor to the very essence of man's existence.

In short, I believe the students must experience school as an extension of home and community not a rejection of them. Not only is it important that the pluralistic system of education help the students develop shared values and common traditions, but also it must help each student find a place for himself within the whole. It must allow each student to construct a vision of pluralism to live by.

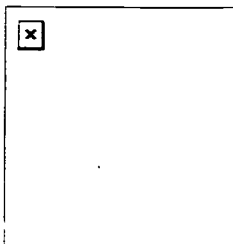
I do recommend the implementation of such a vision in Lebanon for two reasons. The first is because Lebanon is a country made up of diverse religious, racial, ethnic, and social populations and maintains global relations. Lebanon's diverse student body, I believe, is comparable, on a smaller scale, to that of the United States of America. The second reason I recommend the implementation of the ideology is because it echoes one of the goals of *The New Framework for Education in Lebanon* (1995 in Ministry of Education, 1997) to promote the need for cultural awareness. However, such cultural awareness should not be limited to the Lebanese and/or Arab identities but to the global diversities since Lebanon's new national curriculum for language development acknowledges the importance of preparing Lebanese students to be proficient communicators in global languages (Ministry of Education, 1997).

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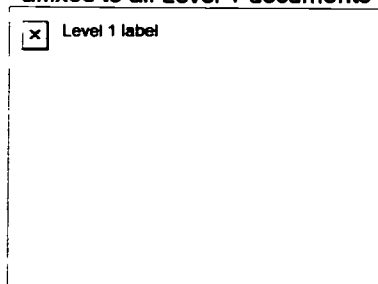
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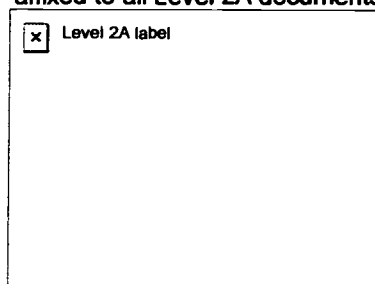
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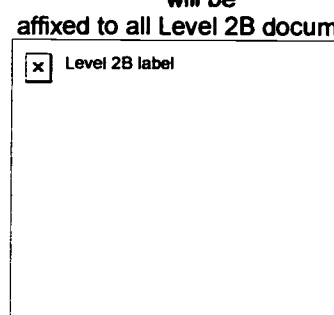
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